

What is claimed is:

Sub A1  
1. A method for determining part replacement related information by an end user, comprising:

5 obtaining an associated identifier of a part by the end user;  
automatically coupling by a scanner interface the identifier of the part to a network enabled browser;  
automatically connecting by the browser over a network connection to a remote database to retrieve replacement related information for the part, such  
10 database searchable by the associated identifier; and  
automatically displaying by the browser for the end user the retrieved replacement related information for the part.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the identifier of the part is a  
15 selected one of a UPC identifier, product-identifier mark, and textual product identifier.

Sub D1  
3. A method according to claim 1, further comprising:  
obtaining at least one user preference; and  
20 arranging the retrieved replacement related information according to the at least one user preference.

4. A method according to claim 3, wherein the user preference is a selected one of limiting price, limiting distance to travel to obtain a replacement part, limiting shipping time for the replacement part, limiting time to effect part replacement, and only displaying a vendor having the replacement part in stock.

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5. A method according to claim 4, further comprising:  
categorizing the retrieved replacement related information into plural categories;  
wherein such categories are sorted according to the at least one user preference.

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6. A method according to claim 3, further comprising:  
identifying at least one provider within the retrieved replacement related information having a replacement part in stock; and  
15 prominently displaying the at least one provider;  
wherein prominently displaying includes sorting the retrieved replacement related information so that the at least one provider is at the top of such retrieved information.

20 7. A method according to claim 1, in which the network connection is a link with the Internet, the method further comprising:

providing the associated identifier in a predetermined format, such format being a selected one of a bar-code format, a product-identifier mark, and a verbal identifier;

wherein a portable bar-code scanner is utilized to obtain the associated

5 identifier.

8. A method according to claim 1, the method further comprising:

contacting a cross-reference hub;

searching the cross-reference hub with the associated identifier to obtain at least one additional product identifier; and

10 automatically searching the remote database with the at least one additional product identifier to retrieve replacement related information for the part.

9. A method according to claim 8, wherein the associated identifier is a non-unique product category reference, and the at least one additional product  
15 identifier is partially unique.

10. A method according to claim 8, further comprising:

semantically analyzing the retrieved replacement related information; and

reorganizing the retrieved replacement related information according such

20 analysis.

11. An article of manufacture, comprising:

a computer readable medium;

wherein encoded on the computer readable medium are instructions capable of causing a processor to perform the steps of claim 1.

Sub B  
5 12. A method according to claim 1, in which the replacement related information includes related part data, where a related part is one that requires replacement along with the part.

10 13. A method according to claim 1, further comprising:  
determining a geographic location for the part;  
identifying vendors of a replacement part for the part, each vendor having a geographic location; and  
sorting the vendors according to their geographic proximity to the part.

15 14. A method according to claim 13, further comprising:  
providing a proximity preference, such preference set to user election if such election has been made, otherwise to a predetermined value; and  
culling the retrieved replacement information according to the proximity preference.

20 Sub A  
15. A method according to claim 13, further comprising:  
receiving user-specified price terms for a replacement part for the part;  
identifying, from the retrieved replacement information, a sales price offered by vendors for the replacement part; and

culling the retrieved replacement information according to the user-specified price terms.

16. An article of manufacture, comprising:

5 a computer readable medium;

wherein encoded on the computer readable medium are instructions capable of causing a processor to perform the steps of claim 15.

Sub 75  
17. A method according to claim 1, further comprising:

10 receiving user-specified price terms for a replacement part for the part;

identifying, from the retrieved replacement information, a sales price offered by vendors for the replacement part; and

culling the retrieved replacement information according to the user-specified price terms.

15 18. A method according to claim 1, the method further comprising:

retrieving from the remote database replacement related concerns, such concerns including warning and suggestions for a user seeking to replace the part;

20 retrieving from the remote database identification of related parts requiring replacement along with the part;

displaying the replacement related concerns to the user; and

notifying the user of the related parts requiring replacement.

19. A method according to claim 18, wherein an expert system interactively displays the replacement related concerns and notification of related parts requiring replacement.

Sub 5  
He 20. A system for determining part replacement related information by an end user, comprising:

a scanner for scanning an associated identifier of a part;

a network-enabled browsing arrangement; and

10 a scanner interface facilitating communication between the scanner interface and the network-enabled browsing arrangement, such communication including transferring the associated identifier to the browsing arrangement;

wherein the browser automatically connects to a remote database over a network to retrieve replacement related information for the part.

15 21. A system according to claim 20, further comprising:

a computing device comprising a processor capable of being directed to process commands stored in a program memory, and an input/output port;

wherein

the scanner is in communication with the input/output port,

20 the browsing arrangement is provided as a first sequence of program commands stored in the program memory for execution by the processor, and

the scanner interface is provided as a second sequence of program commands stored in the program memory for execution by the processor, where the

scanner interface receives the scanned associated identifier through the input/output port and provides such identifier to the browsing arrangement.

22. A system according to claim 20, wherein the scanner is incorporated  
5 into the computing device.

Sub A1  
23. A system, comprising:

means for scanning an associated identifier of a part by the end user;

10 means for automatically coupling by a scanner interface the scanned identifier of the part to a network enabled browser;

means for automatically connecting by the browser over a network connection to a remote database to retrieve replacement related information for the part, such database searchable by the associated identifier; and

15 means for automatically displaying by the browser for the end user the retrieved replacement related information for the part.

24. A system according to claim 23, further comprising:

means for obtaining at least one user preference; and

20 means for arranging the retrieved replacement related information according to the at least one user preference.

Add B1

Add D2